

Beyond A Dangerous Formalism

A round-up of positions in support of Operation Epic Fury/ Roaring Lion



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For decades, the international community has approached the Iranian threat through the lens of strategic patience and diplomatic containment. However, as the regime's nuclear enrichment approaches the "breakout" threshold and its proxy network destabilizes the Middle East and beyond, Israel and the United States have decided to take decisive action.

Many international legal experts have argued that the war is illegal, [plain and simple](#). Yet, numerous scholars and state leaders counter that international law cannot be a suicide pact. They contend that a legal framework that forbids preventing a nuclear armed theocracy is not a functioning legal system, but a “handcuff” on the survival of democratic states.

1. The Legal Basis for the Operation

David Wolfson KC, the UK’s Shadow Attorney General, took to X to dismantle the British government’s legal position on the American-Israeli operations against Iran. Significantly, he [argued](#) that:

International law ought to provide a mechanism to restrain and, if necessary, end despotic and tyrannical regimes such as that in Iran. If the doctrines of international law prove unable to restrain Iranian terrorism and mass murder, and tie the hands of democracies while forcing them to stand and watch Iranian atrocities, international law will have failed. It will have become a fundamentally immoral system of law, and one which is worse than worthless in the modern world.

His argument breaks down into three core pillars:

- **Collective & Individual Self-Defense:** The UK has a right to defend itself against Iran’s documented pattern of “tens” of domestic terror plots, cyberattacks, and direct threats to UK overseas personnel. Simultaneously, international law permits the UK to assist allies (the US and Israel) in collective self-defense against a nation that has already initiated direct and proxy-led attacks.
- **The Nuclear & Existential Threat:** Wolfson argues that Iran’s 60% uranium enrichment and long-range delivery systems constitute an “imminent” threat. Iran has attacked the United States and Israel repeatedly, directly and through its proxies. For Israel specifically, Iranian nuclear enrichment is a “genocidal risk” given Iran’s stated intent to destroy the state.

- **Preventative Obligation:** Beyond reactive defense, he posits that the UK has a legal obligation under international law to **prevent** genocide before it starts, rather than merely attempting to stop it once it is underway.

Jeff Blackett, Judge Advocate General of the British Armed Forces between 2004 and 2020, made a similar argument in [the Spectator](#).

Blackett acknowledges the reality of Iran's "Long War" against the United States and Israel. President Trump listed decades of Iranian attacks on Americans, going back to the 1983 Beirut Baracks bombing. Iranian IEDs killed British servicemen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Iranian nuclear program is an imminent threat to the United States and Israel. The Iranian regime has used negotiations as a stalling tactic to advance enrichment. Diplomacy is not a credible pathway to preventing Iran from attaining nuclear weapons.

Blackett also argues for the "moral and legal weight of humanitarian intervention". Western democracies have intervened in Liberia, Iraq, and Kosovo to prevent mass atrocities. The Iranian people have been subject to decades of repression and torture.

A narrow legalism must not be allowed to condemn Iran to a theocratic regime and Israel and the United States to existential danger:

International law was designed to protect the civilised world, not to serve as a set of handcuffs for those tasked with defending it. If our legal frameworks truly forbade us from stopping a genocidal, nuclear-aspirant theocracy, then it would be the law and not the action – that was fundamentally broken. Fortunately, the law is far more robust than the anaemic interpretations currently favoured by the high priests of paralysis in Whitehall. It bestows clear legitimacy on those who refuse to wait for catastrophe before acting in self-defence.

Writing in the [Telegraph](#), Professor Gerald Steinberg argues that:

A regime that calls for the elimination of another UN member state cannot reasonably expect that state (i.e. Israel) to treat its march toward nuclear capability as a routine matter of sovereign discretion, regardless of actual international agreements.

The Caroline doctrine recognizes the right of anticipatory self-defence when the threat is “instant and overwhelming”. The reality of precision missiles and rapid nuclear breakout means that states under threat must act immediately.

[Australian experts](#), Dr. Greg Rose and Dr. Anthony Bergin, justify the operations on the inherent right to self-defense, including collective self-defense of allies, the ongoing state of armed conflict and the “responsibility to protect” - to prevent crimes against humanity in other countries, including massacres of Iranian protesters or genocidal nuclear attacks on Israel.

The way to end the aggression of Iran is regime change. That makes the precisely targeted actions of the US and Israel entirely proportionate.

2. Widespread State Support

Yuval Shany and Amichai Cohen note the [widespread support](#) for the operation among Western democracies.

[Canada](#), [Australia](#), [Ukraine](#), [Albania](#), and the [Secretary General of NATO](#) rapidly expressed support for the operation.

Regarding claims that the operation violates international law, consider the following statements:

- Germany’s Chancellor Friedrich Merz [said](#):

“Categorizing the events under international law will have relatively little effect. This is especially true when these classifications remain largely inconsequential

Over the years and decades, appeals from Europe, including Germany, condemning Iran's violations of international law, and even extensive packages of sanctions had little effect. This is also due to the fact we were not prepared to enforce fundamental interests with military force if necessary.

Therefore, this is not the time to lecture our partners and allies. Despite our reservations, we share many of their goals without being able to actually achieve them ourselves."

● Netherlands Foreign Minister, Tom Berendsen [said](#):

"I also want to be honest that international law isn't the only framework you can apply to this situation. You also have to be realistic, given the murderous nature of the Iranian regime."

● Belgium Foreign Minister, Maxime Prévot [said](#):

"As a defender of international law, Belgium must acknowledge that the way in which this operation was conducted does not comply with the norms," but "must be weighed against the principle of reality;" that "we cannot say that Iran is a model student" of international law, and the U.S.-Israel operations are "justified for global security;"

● Belgium's Minister of Defense Theo Francken [said](#) the U.S.-Iran operations are "absolutely justified" and [reportedly](#): "The question of whether the attack is in line with international law is for lawyers to argue, he said. Though he supports international law, he says it does not work in practice. The Iranian regime is able to do what it wants."

The Iranian regime stands as a uniquely hostile entity—a genocidal threat to Israel, a source of regional aggression, and a brutal oppressor of its own people. With diplomacy proven ineffective against Tehran's clerical leadership, the regime remains

committed to fueling global terrorism and state-sponsored conflict. The current military actions by Israel and the United States are a direct response to decades of t provocation, offering a path toward dismantling a dangerous theocracy. To prioritiz rigid legal technicalities over the liberation of the Iranian people and the security o the West suggests a profound moral failure within traditional international law. Ultimately, "Operation Epic Fury" represents more than a security maneuver; it is a necessary pivot toward a legal and political framework rooted in both moral clarity and strategic realism.

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